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SHADOWED IMAGES

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Kirkwood  
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It has been said that it is the task of the artist to mirror the world. Interpreted narrowly, such a dictum leads to the most obvious kinds of realism representing the surface appearance of things. But "the world" is not just a surface; it exists in depth, as both the physical sciences and psychology have demonstrated. And the artist is, after all, much more than "an eye." Like every one else, he is an enormously complex being with vast uncharted areas, regions where the clear light of analytical reason has yet to penetrate. Even to allude to these dim recesses raises a semantic problem which arouses deep and often bitter feelings. What are the appropriate words? The soul? The id? The unknown? The unknowable? All such terms seem both inadequate and entangled in webs of connotation which are despised or denied by some. Yet works of art do attempt to open windows on this region, whatever it may be called. They present forms which refer to it by visual analogies, and which attempt to provide insights to its nature. And this area is a part of the world. In fact, it may be that it is through this area that we know the world as form, and as beauty and ugliness, as good and evil rather than as simple sense perceptions.

But why not have the artist restrict his investigation to that region where clarity prevails? Why not pretend that nothing exists beyond its boundaries? This would make things easier, more comfortable and reassuring. To attempt to venture beyond it as the creative artist does - as indeed all creative men do - involves many risks. Yet to refuse this risk is apparently contrary to the human spirit. For to confine ourselves to the known or the clearly knowable is to accept an incomplete and misleading picture of the world.

Like the scientist or the philosopher, the artist presents his vision of the world. It is sometimes clear, precise, and obvious but at other times obscure

and ambiguous. Often the artist appears to be involved in a struggle with images reluctant to emerge. As we perceive them dimly they may seem illogical but demanding. Efforts to describe and explain them in precise, logical terms are noble but probably inappropriate. They are attempts to explain a particular view of the world in a language which is specifically applicable to a different view. The language for revealing the artist's version is composed of precisely his works of art.

This exhibition has assembled the works of five artists, all different, yet all involved in the creation of images which mirror, however dimly, a world as real and meaningful as that measured by the scientists' instruments. And in these "shadowed images" it is possible that we may find a view of the world which we recognize.

Philip Guston and Adja Yunkers are well known as artists of the so-called New York School of Abstract-Expressionist or Abstract-Impressionist painters. Edwin Dickinson, of an older generation, has never completely relinquished the recognizable image but has often permitted it to play hide-and-seek among the shadows.

Herbert Ferber and Ibram Lassaw are both sculptors who belong to the "New York School." Of the works exhibited here, the two by Ferber deal obviously with figures and their shadows while that by Lassaw is more completely abstract.

But more or less abstract is not the question here. The images may be at various stages of clarity but they are all emerging from an environment of shadows and lights which provides one of the basic elements with which these artists create.